



WHERE IS THE DWARF LAKE IRIS?

The Yak had hoped to see the state wildflower for his project on the state's symbols.

But the dwarf lake iris doesn't bloom until at least Memorial Day, which is Monday. So the Yak asked Patrick Fields, president of the Michigan Botanical Club, what the iris looks like.

"I've seen places where people's lawns are nothing but dwarf lake iris — but only for about a week," said Fields, a biology instructor at Olivet College near Lansing.

"Almost all of them are purple. There's a white mutant, and every once in a while you'll find one — but it isn't a true albino because the leaves are normal. There's a tiny bit of yellow in the center of the flower."

Fields has made four trips to see the blossoms: one to Rogers City, in the state's northeast corner, on Lake Huron; two to Drummond Island, at the top of



the lake near the eastern end of the Upper Peninsula, and one to the Bruce Peninsula, on the lake's eastern shore in Ontario, Canada.

But there are small populations elsewhere. Manitoulin Island, the largest island in Lake Huron, which is part of Ontario, "is just covered with them," said Fields, "and there's one tiny place on the Door Peninsula in Wisconsin.

"They hug the coastlines of northern Lake Michigan and northern and eastern Lake Huron and that's it. There's one

site on the southern shore of Lake Superior."

But don't look for the rare iris on beaches — it doesn't like sand. It thrives in the low wet spots near beaches, not on them.

"What most impresses me is that this is a state symbol that truly represents Michigan because almost no one else has it," said Fields. "This is ours."

Keep reading the Yak for more on our beautiful state wildflower.

By Patricia Chargot

The dwarf lake iris is a lot smaller than other iris — only six to eight inches tall, with a flower that's only 1.5 to two inches in diameter. It's listed as threatened in Michigan.



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